

VZCZCXRO1415
PP RUEHDT RUEHPB
DE RUEHHM #1064 2900615
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 170615Z OCT 07
FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3238
INFO RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI PRIORITY 2245
RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE
RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY 3451

UNCLAS HO CHI MINH CITY 001064

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

PASS TO EAP/MLS AND PRM/ANE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CVIS](#) [CMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [VN](#)

SUBJECT: ERO CALLS AN GIANG INCIDENT UNACCEPTABLE, PROMISES MORE
COORDINATION WITH PROVINCES, MORE DIALOGUE WITH USG

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Responding to the Consul General's previous protest (septel) over harassment and interference of Consulate staff during a routine FPU investigation in An Giang province, ERO Deputy Director Le Hung Quoc said evicting Consulate personnel from the hotel in An Giang was not acceptable, and admitted there are "other forces" in Vietnam's government that need to "change with the times." ConGenoffs also provided more details of incidents in which provincial and local authorities had impeded our work by inserting themselves in private meetings and questioning and intimidating our contacts. Quoc promised to raise the incidents with provincial authorities and said in the future, "private meetings will be private." End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) DPO Dickey, accompanied by Poloff Bennett and HRS chief Swanson, called on HCMC ERO Deputy Director Le Hung Quoc to continue the discussion begun on October 5 regarding inappropriate interference by provincial authorities in a consular fraud investigation trip. Quoc, echoing the apology delivered by MFA Hanoi to Embassy on October 11, said that local authorities' actions threatening Consulate staff and evicting them from their hotel in An Giang were "not acceptable." Quoc added that the GVN's new policy of "openness to the world" has not been in place for long, and that it will take time for various levels of government to adapt to changes. Quoc said there are "other forces" in the Vietnamese government that need to "change with the times." He said that although the provinces in question had offered explanations for why they had taken certain actions against our consulate team, Quoc judged that "there were no good excuses" for such unacceptable behavior.

¶3. (SBU) Responding to Quoc's previous offer (septel) to investigate interference in other consulate work trips, Poloff and HRS chief informed Quoc of three incidents during recent visits to the Central Highlands, during which both uniform and plainclothes police brought our contacts in for questioning, stationed themselves outside their homes, and attempted to insert themselves into meetings. This interference and harassment had occurred even though we had expressly requested, via diplomatic note, that we be allowed to meet our contacts in private. As a result, our contacts were intimidated and unwilling to share information. DPO Dickey said the interference in our meetings negatively impacts the credibility of our reporting to Washington because it hinders our ability to comment objectively on allegations of human rights and religious freedom violations. As these allegations often originate among activists in the United States, it is in the interest of both our countries to investigate them. Hindering the consulate's ability to investigate can only further damage Vietnam's international image.

¶4. (SBU) Quoc agreed to raise incidents with provincial authorities and said in the future "private meetings will be

private meetings." Quoc said though he appreciated the fact the Consulate was helping GVN counter inaccurate reports of GVN actions in the U.S., it was often difficult for the ERO to explain to "other parts of the government" why the United States was only interested in meeting those who "do not support the government's policies."

15. This cable was coordinated with Embassy Hanoi.

FAIRFAX